

Interesting information as to the effect of the synthetic indigo on the production of the natural color is given in a paper by Professor Henry E. Armstrong at a meeting of one of the sections of the Royal Society of Arts (*Jour. Roy. Soc. Arts*, vol. lxvii, p. 446, 1919). When synthetic indigo was first put on the market by the Germans (1897), the area occupied by the indigo culture was 1,688,042 acres. Up to that time the industry had been very prosperous, but the synthetic product at once began to compete, and when the war broke out in 1914 the acreage had fallen to 150,000, about one-tenth the original. The war, of course, by cutting off the opportunities of German competition, gave a chance for advancement of the cultivation of the plant, and by 1917 the acreage had increased to three and one-half times that of the preceding five years. The greatest increase was in Madras, but the encouragement has fallen off materially with the cessation of hostilities, and the production of the natural color is diminishing. In view of what the Americans have accomplished it is likely that the natural product will soon cease to be an important factor in the dye-stuff market.

H. L.

**An Extension of Applied Chemistry.** (*Amer. Chem. Soc. News Service*).—Department stores and mail order houses are now installing chemical laboratories as part of their organization and are retaining chemists by the year.

One large dry goods firm in a city of the Northwest has a complete laboratory in full view of customers in which tests of all kinds of merchandise are conducted. The exact kind of dye in fabrics, the fibres which they contain, whether cotton or wool or silk, or mixtures of various threads, can thus be determined to the satisfaction of both merchant and consumer.

By having the chemist continually checking up on quality of products, large houses which sell merchandise by parcel post over wide areas can describe exactly everything enumerated in their catalogues. Thus they do not guarantee articles until they have had them thoroughly examined. As customers are so scattered over the country, accurate descriptions of merchandise prevent misunderstandings. The cutting down of unnecessary correspondence is one of the economies which has resulted from taking in a chemical partner.

Much as does big business make use of chemistry at the present time, it was only about a quarter of a century ago that it even sensed the relation of research to success in manufacturing and commerce.



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